

**ARMENIAN CIVIL SOCIETY APPEAL**  
**for Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing**  
**on Safeguarding the People of Nagorno-Karabakh**

Since 12 December 2022, ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) have been under siege as Azerbaijan blocked the lifeline - Lachin corridor - connecting it to the outside world. More recently, Azerbaijan completely banned any communication to and from Nagorno-Karabakh, including for the vehicles of the International Red Cross and the Russian peacekeepers that helped to alleviate the consequences of the siege.

Now, people in Nagorno-Karabakh are running out of food, the patients cannot get the necessary medication and service. Many families are separated. There are regular cuts of gas, electricity in Nagorno-Karabakh, as the Azerbaijani side controls all the communications. Economic activities are hampered and people are mostly deprived of income.

In parallel to the blockade, Azerbaijan uses terror tactics to threaten the local Armenians - instigating military offensives, occupying villages, capturing and executing civilians, hampering the agricultural work, spreading fake intimidating news, destroying the Armenian cultural heritage. These violations take place in the presence of the Russian peace-keeping forces. Psychological terror against the local population is devastating, and if there is no due and timely intervention of the international community, the Armenian people of Artsakh will be forced out from their ancestral homeland.

The political leadership of Azerbaijan completely ignores various condemnations by the international organizations, including the orders of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). On December 24, 2022, president Ilham Aliyev stated: "Nobody can influence us. There may be calls, there may be some statements, but we do not need to pay attention to them. We are answering these calls simply out of political courtesy. But this will not change our position in the slightest."<sup>1</sup>

On a daily basis, we witness growing evidence of Ilham Aliyev's aggressive racist policy. He consistently feeds his society with hatred towards Armenians, which means that it is not possible to expect sustainable peace and security merely with a paper called "peace agreement". Moreover, the new rhetoric of Azerbaijan includes territorial claims against the territory of the Republic of Armenia naming it "Western Azerbaijan." There is a need for a stronger stance of the international community and demonstration of the responsibility to protect.

We appeal to the US Congress with a request to prevent ethnic cleansing in Artsakh and protect the rights and security of the local Armenians.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3686739.html>

We call for your urgent and decisive actions, including efforts to achieve a resolution of the UN Security Council, in order to ensure:

1. Inclusion of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the list of countries most at risk for atrocities to ensure relevant measures for prevention and response;
2. Azerbaijan's compliance with the order of ICJ, immediate deblocking of the Lachin corridor and removal of the checkpoint to ensure free and safe passage of people and vehicles to and from Nagorno-Karabakh;
3. Deployment of international peacekeeping forces as well as the access of international missions to Nagorno-Karabakh - to remove isolation of the Armenian people from the world and to prevent the possible ethnic cleansing or genocide.

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